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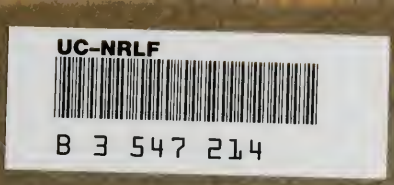

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Thomas Warton
A Biographical and Critical Study

BY

CLARISSA RINAKER

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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PREFACE

The following study of Thomas Warton's *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* and its relation to the historical method of literary criticism is part of a more extensive biographical and critical study of Thomas Warton. In preparing the life of Warton the writer has made use of unpublished manuscripts in Trinity College Library, Oxford, in Winchester College Library, Winchester, and in the possession of the descendants of the Warton family. The biography further includes a number of unpublished Warton letters. The purpose of the critical study is to show the relation of all of Warton's work—his poetry, his criticism, his history of English poetry, his various antiquarian works—to the literary movements of his day. The writer has tried to show that this frequently underrated author was an important contributor to the literary reaction in the eighteenth century. His enthusiastic study of the middle ages, especially of the history and literature of Britain, is his most characteristic contribution and enabled him to supply in every department of literature which he entered an important quality previously lacking. To poetry he added a new interest and much picturesque imagery besides furthering the return to nature and the sonnet revival. To literary history he contributed a fuller study of English poetry in its earlier periods than had previously been attempted and he showed that the poetry of the neglected mediæval period was at least as important as classical literature in the development of modern English literature. In criticism his study of the past produced the historical method and helped greatly to emancipate literary criticism in the eighteenth

century from the tyranny of rules. This study of Warton is to be completed with a bibliography of the sources of his *History of English Poetry,* which is based upon the examination of early editions of the books Warton used and the comparison of his references with the originals.

THOMAS WARTON AND THE HISTORICAL METHOD IN LITERARY CRITICISM

Thomas Warton's *Observations on the 'Fairy Queen' of Spenser*[1] has hardly yet received due recognition as the first important piece of modern historical criticism in the field of English literature. By the variety of its new tenets and the definitiveness of its revolt against pseudo-classical criticism by rule, it marks the beginning of a new school. Out of the turmoil of the quarrel between the 'ancients' and the 'moderns' the pseudo-classical compromise had emerged. The 'moderns,' by admitting and apologizing for a degree of barbarity and uncouthness in even their greatest poets, had established their right to a secure and reputable place in the assembly of immortals, although on the very questionable ground of conformity with the ancients and by submitting to be judged by rules which had not determined their development. It was thus by comparisons with the ancients that Dryden found Spenser's verse harmonious but his design imperfect;[2] it was by applying the classical rules for epic poetry that Addison praised *Paradise Lost,*[3] and that Steele wished an 'Encomium of *Spencer* also.'[4]

Impossible as was the task of reconciling literature partly romantic and modern with classical and ancient standards, the critics of a rationalistic age did not hesitate to attempt it: common sense was the pseudo-classical handmaiden that justified the rules, methodized nature, stand-

[1] London, 1754. Second edition, corrected and enlarged, 2 vols., 1762. References in this article are to the third edition, 1807.

[2] *Essay on Satire.*

[3] *Spectator,* January to May, 1712.

[4] *Spectator,* No. 540.

ardized critical taste, and restrained the 'Enthusiastick Spirit' and the *je ne sais quoi* of the school of taste. The task was a hard one, and the pseudo-classical position dangerous and ultimately untenable. A more extended study of literary history—innocuously begun by Rymer—[5] and an enlightened freedom from prejudice would show at the same time the inadequacy of the rules and the possibility of arriving at sounder critical standards.

These are the two principal gifts that Thomas Warton had with which he revolutionized criticism: intelligent independence to throw off the bondage of the rules, and broad knowledge to supply material for juster criteria. When he said, 'It is absurd to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to,'[6] he not merely asserted their right to be judged by Gothic or romantic, as opposed to pseudo-classical, standards, but he sounded the death-knell of criticism by rule, and the bugle-note of the modern school. When, in the same critical work, and even more impressively in two later ones,[7] he brought to bear upon the subject in hand a rich store of ideas and illustrations drawn from many literatures—Latin, Greek, Italian, French, and English in its obscure as well as its more familiar eras—he rendered an even more important service on the side of constructive criticism.

Warton's *Observations* is connected not only with the history of critical theory in the eighteenth century, but also with what is called the Spenserian revival. It was partly the culmination of one of several related movements tending toward the restoration of the older English

[5] *A Short View of Tragedy*, 1693. See Chapter v.

[6] *Observations*, I, p. 21.

[7] *History of English Poetry*, 1774, 1778, 1781. Milton's *Poems upon Several Occasions*, 1785.

classics. While Chaucer was slowly winning a small circle of appreciators; Shakespeare, from ignorantly apologetic admiration and garbled staging, through serious study and intelligent comprehension, was coming into his own; and Milton was attaining a vogue that left its mark on the new poetry; the Spenserian revival was simultaneously preparing to exert an even greater influence. Although Spenser was never without a select circle of readers, that circle was small and coldly critical during the pseudo-classical period when his principal charm was that which his moral afforded readers who held that the purpose of poetry was to instruct. Most readers assented to Jonson's dictum that Spenser 'writ no language' without attending to the caveat that followed, 'Yet I would have him read for his matter.' The difficulties of his language, the tiresomeness of his stanza,[8] the unclassical imperfection of his design, and the extravagance of the adventures too often obscured even the beauty of his moral. Therefore it was after a pretty general neglect of his poetry that the eighteenth century saw a species of Spenserian imitation arise which showed to what low ebb the study of Spenser had sunk. The first of these imitators either ignorantly fancied that any arrangement of from six to ten iambic pentameter lines capped with an Alexandrine, with distinctly Popeian cadence and a sprinkling of 'I ween,' 'I weet' and 'whilom' by way of antiquated diction, could pass for Spenserian verse,[9] or followed the letter of the

[8] Hughes, *Remarks on the 'Fairy Queen'* prefixed to Ed. *Spenser's Works*, 2nd. ed., 1750, I, p. lxvii.

[9] Prior: *Ode to the Queen, written in Imitation of Spenser's Style*, 1706, Preface. Whitehead: *Vision of Solomon*, 1730, and two *Odes to the Hon. Charles Townsend.* Boyse: *The Olive: an Heroic Ode*, etc., in the stanza of Spenser (*ababcdcdee*), 1736-7. *Vision of Patience: an Allegorical Poem*, 1741; *Psalm XLII: In Imitation of the Style of Spenser* (*ababcc*, no Alexandrine), 1736-7. Blacklock: *Hymn to*

stanza closely enough, but failed to take their model seriously, and misapplied it to vulgar burlesque, social and political satire, and mere moralizing.[10] Their ignorance of the poet whom they professed to imitate is marked. Often they knew him only through Prior's imitations: usually their attempts at antiquated diction betray them.[11] Occasionally, as in the case of Shenstone, a study of Spenser followed imitation of him, and led to a new attitude, changes in the imitation, and finally, apparently, to an admiration that he neither understood nor cared to admit.[12]

Divine Love, and *Philantheus* (*ababbcc*), 1746. T. Warton, Sr.: *Philander* (*ababcc*), 1748. Lloyd: *Progress of Envy* (*ababcdedd*), 1751. Smith: *Thales* (*ababbccc*), 1751. See W. L. Phelps: *Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement*, Boston, 1902. Ch. on Spenserian Revival, and Appendix I, for a more complete list.

[10] Pope: *The Alley*, date unknown, an exercise in versification, and ill-natured burlesque. Croxall: *Two Original Cantos of the Fairy Queen*, 1713 and 1714. Akenside: *The Virtuoso*, 1737, mild satire. G. West: *Abuse of Travelling*, 1739, satire. Cambridge: *Archimage*, 1742-50, a clever parody. Shenstone: *The Schoolmistress*, 1742, satirical. Pitt: *The Jordan*, 1747, vulgar burlesque. Ridley: *Psyche*, 1747, moral allegory. Mendez: *The Seasons*, 1751, *Squire of Dames*, 1748-58. Thomson: *Castle of Indolence*, 1748. See also Phelps, as above.

[11] Such slips as 'nor ceasen he from study' and 'he would oft ypine' in Akenside's *Virtuoso*, and even Thomson's note: 'The letter *y* is frequently placed in the beginning of a word by Spenser to lengthen it a syllable; and *en* at the end of a word for the same reason' (Glossary to the *Castle of Indolence*).

[12] I cannot agree with Professor Phelps that, 'as people persisted in admiring "The School-Mistress" for its own sake, he finally consented to agree with them, and in later editions omitted the commentary explaining that the whole thing was done in jest' (*The Beginning of the English Romantic Movement*, p. 66). On the contrary, it seems pretty clear that although Shenstone had probably not come to any very profound appreciation for the older poet, his admiration for him became more and more serious, but that he lacked the courage of his convictions, and conformed outwardly with a public opinion wholly ignorant of Spenser. Two later letters of Shenstone's indicate pretty clearly that it was he, and not 'the

Of course by far the best of the Spenserian imitators was James Thomson, whose work was the first to rise above the merely imitative and to have an independent value as creative poetry. Although his 'Advertisement' and a few burlesque touches throughout the poem are evidence of the influence of the *Schoolmistress* and of the prevailing attitude toward Spenser, Thomson went further than mere external imitation, and reproduced something of the melody and atmosphere of the *Fairy Queen*. Thus poetical enthusiasm began the Spenserian revival; it remained for a great critical enthusiasm to vindicate the source of this inspiration and to establish it on the firm basis of scholarly study and intelligent appreciation.

The first attempt at anything like an extended criticism of the *Fairy Queen* was in the two essays, *On Allegorical Poetry* and *Remarks on the 'Fairy Queen,'* which profaced John Hughes's edition of Spenser's works in 1715, the first eighteenth-century edition.[13] Steele, in the 540th

people,' whose taste for Spenser had developed. In November, 1745, he wrote to Graves (to whom he had written of his early contempt) that he had 'read Spenser once again and added full as much more to my *School-mistress* in regard to *number of lines; something* in point of *matter* (or *manner* rather) *which* does not displease me. I would be glad if Mr. ——— were, upon your request, to give his opinion of particulars, etc.' Evidently the judgment was unfavorable, for he wrote the next year, 'I thank you for your perusal of that trivial poem. If I were going to print it, I should give way to your remarks *implicitly*, and would not *dare* to do otherwise. But so long as I keep it in manuscript, you will pardon my silly prejudices, if I chuse to read and shew it with the addition of most of my new stanzas. I own, I have a fondness for several, imagining them to be *more* in Spenser's way, yet more independent on the antique phrase, than any part of the poem: and, on that account, I cannot yet prevail on myself to banish *them* entirely; but were I to print, I should (with *some* reluctance) give way to your sentiments' (Shenstone's *Works*, 1777, III, pp. 105-6).

[13] And the first attempt at an annotated edition. *Spenser's Works, to which is prefix'd . . . . an Essay on Allegorical Poetry* by Mr.

Spectator, three years before had desired an 'Encomium of *Spencer*,' 'that charming author,' like Addison's Milton papers, but nothing further than his own meagre hints was forthcoming. And Hughes's attitude, like that of the imitators, was wholly apologetic.

Hughes seems almost to have caught a glimpse of the promised land when he refused to examine the *Fairy Queen* by the classical rules for epic poetry, saying: 'As it is plain the Author never design'd it by those Rules, I think it ought rather to be consider'd as a Poem of a particular kind, describing in a Series of Allegorical Adventures or Episodes the most noted Virtues and Vices: to compare it therefore with the Models of Antiquity wou'd be like drawing a Parallel between the *Roman* and the *Gothick* Architecture.' [14] At first sight one is inclined to think this very near to Warton's revolutionary dicta, but the bungling way in which he spoiled the effect of so striking a statement by preparing in advance a set of pseudo-classical and misfit standards to apply as he exposed the unsuitability of the old, merely by the substitution of allegory for epic, shows that he was a true pseudo-classicist after all. He could not, nor would, throw off his allegiance to the ancients. If the *Fairy Queen* could not be considered as an epic, it could be judged as an allegory, the rules of which, though not described by the ancients, were easily determinable. And in attempting to set forth the rules for allegorical poetry, he tried to conform to the spirit of the classical critics as he understood it, and to illustrate his subject by examples from classical poets. Nevertheless he felt some reluctance in introducing a sub-

Hughes, 6 vols., London, 1715. Second edition, 1750. There is a second preface, *Remarks on the 'Fairy Queen.'* References are to the second edition.

[14] *Remarks on the 'Fairy Queen,'* I, p. xliii.

ject which was 'something out of the way, and not expressly treated upon by those who have laid down Rules for the Art of Poetry.' [15] Hughes's ideas of what should constitute successful allegory were therefore embodied in his *Essay on Allegorical Poetry,* by the uncertain light of which the critic hoped 'not only to discover many Beauties in the *Fairy Queen,* but likewise to excuse some of its Irregularities.' [16]

Hughes did not, however, yield to the spell of 'magic Spenser's wildly-warbled song.' While he admitted that his fable gave 'the greatest Scope to that Range of Fancy which was so remarkably his Talent,' [17] and that his plan, though not well chosen, was at least well executed and adapted to his talent, he apologized for and excused both fable and plan on the score of the Italian models which he followed, and the remnants of the 'old Gothic Chivalry' which yet survived. The only praise he could give the poem was wholly pseudo-classical,—for the moral and didactic bent which the poet had contrived to give the allegory,[18] and for some fine passages where the author rises above himself and imitates the ancients.[19] In spite of his statement that the *Fairy Queen* was not to be examined by the strict rules of epic poetry, he could not free himself from that bondage, and the most of his essay is taken up with a discussion of the poem in the light of the rules. Moreover Hughes was but ill-equipped for his task; he failed even to realize that a great field of literary history must be thoroughly explored before the task of elucidating Spenser could be intelligently undertaken, and that genuine enthusiasm for the poet could alone arouse much interest in him. These are the reasons why nearly

[15] *Essay on Allegorical Poetry,* I, p. xxi.
[16] *Remarks on the 'Fairy Queen,'* I, p. xlii.
[17] I, p. xliv. [18] I, p. xl. [19] I, p. l.

forty years elapsed before the edition was reprinted, and why it failed to give a tremendous impetus to the Spenserian revival. Yet, notwithstanding its defects, it is extremely significant that Hughes should have undertaken at all the editing of so neglected a poet.[20] It is a straw that points the direction of the wind.

The next attempt at Spenserian criticism was a small volume of *Remarks on Spenser's Poems and on Milton's 'Paradise Regained,'* published anonymously in 1734, and soon recognized as the work of Dr. Jortin, a classical scholar of some repute. This is practically valueless as a piece of criticism. But Jortin was at least partly conscious of his failure and of a reason for it, though he was more anxious to have the exact text determined by a 'collation of editions, and by comparing the author with himself' than to furnish an interpretive criticism; and he acknowledged himself unwilling to bestow the necessary time and application for the work,[21]—a gratifying acknowledgment of the fact that no valuable work could be done in this field without special preparation for it.

And when Thomas Warton was able to bring this special preparation for the first time to the study of the *Fairy Queen,* he produced a revolution in criticism. Freed from the tyranny of the rules by the perception of their limitations, he substituted untried avenues of approach and

[20] The neglect of Spenser is best shown by the few editions of either the *Fairy Queen* or the complete works which had appeared since the first three books of the former were published in 1590. *Faerie Queene,* 1st ed., 4to., 1590-6; 2nd, 1596; 3rd, fol., 1609; Birch ed., 3 vols., 4to., 1751. *Poetical Works,* 1st fol. ed., 1611; 2nd, 1617-18; 3rd, 1679. Hughes, 1st ed., 1715, 2nd, 1750.

[21] Jortin's conclusion quoted in Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes,* II, p. 53. H. E. Cory says nothing of Jortin's Remarks in his monograph, *The Critics of Edmund Spenser,* Univ. of California *Pub. in Mod. Phil.,* II, 2, pp. 81-182.

juster standards of criticism, and revealed beauties which could never have been discovered with the old restrictions. That he should be without trace of pseudo-classicism is something we cannot expect; but that his general critical method and principles are ultimately irreconcilable with even the most generous interpretation of that term, is a conclusion one cannot escape after a careful study of the *Observations on the 'Fairy Queen.'*

Briefly, the causes of Warton's superiority over all previous critics of Spenser, the reasons why he became through this piece of critical writing the founder of a new kind of criticism, are four. First, he recognized the inadequacy of the classical rules, as interpreted by Boileau and other modern commentators, as standards for judging modern literature, and declared his independence of them and his intention of following new methods based upon the belief that the author's purpose is at least as important a subject for critical study as the critic's theories, and that pure imagination is as important a factor in creative literature as reason. Second, he introduced the modern historical method of criticism by recognizing that no work of art could be independently judged, isolated from the conditions under which it was produced, without reference to the influences which determined its character; and without considering its relation to other literatures. In taking so broad a view of his subject, Warton was, of course, recognizing the necessity for a comparative study of literature. In the third place, and as a consequence of this independence and this greater breadth of view, Warton understood more fully than his contemporaries the true relation between classical and modern literature, understood that the English writers of the boasted Augustan age, in renouncing their heritage from the middle ages, had deprived themselves of the qualities which alone could have

redeemed their desiccated pseudo-classicism. And last, Warton made a place in criticism for the reader's spontaneous delight and enthusiasm.

Few critics of the 18th century recognized any difference between their own rules and practice and those of the ancients, or saw the need for modern standards for judging modern poems. Just here comes the important and irreparable break between Warton and his contemporaries. While Hughes and the rest attempted to justify Spenser by pointing out conformities to the rules [22] where they existed or might be fancied, and condemned his practice when they failed to find any, Warton was at some pains to show that Hughes failed and that such critics must fail because their critical method was wrong.[23] He pointed out that the *Fairy Queen* cannot be judged by rule, that 'the plan and conduct' of Spenser's poem 'is highly exceptionable,' 'is confused and irregular,' and has 'no general unity'; [24] it fails completely when examined by the rules. To Warton this clearly showed the existence of another standard of criticism—not the Aristotelian, but the poet's: Spenser had not tried to write like Homer, but like Ariosto; his standard was romantic, not classical; and he was to be judged by what he tried to do.

Warton's declaration of independence of pseudo-classical criticism was a conscious revolt; yet it was one to which he made some effort to win the assent of his contemporaries

[22] Dryden had done the same thing in the *Dedication to the Translation of Juvenal* by pointing out how the 'character of Prince Arthur shines throughout the whole poem,' and Warton took issue squarely with him on the point and denied any such unity. See *Observations*, I, pp. 10-11. Addison used the same method in his papers on *Paradise Lost*. Beni was probably the originator of this sort of misapplied criticism in his comparison of Tasso with Homer and Virgil (I, p. 3).

[23] I, pp. 11 ff. [24] I, p. 17.

by conceding that Spenser's frequent extravagances [25] did violate the rules approved by an age that took pride in its critical taste. His desire to engage their interest, however, neither succeeded in that purpose nor persuaded him that those rules were properly applied to poems written in ignorance of them. There is no uncertainty, no compromise with pseudo-classical criticism in the flat defiance, 'it is absurd to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to.' [26]

Having thus condemned the accepted standards as inadequate for a just criticism of the *Fairy Queen,* Warton's next purpose was to find those by which it could be properly judged: not the rules of which the poet was ignorant, but the literature with which he was familiar. He recognized quite clearly a distinction between a classical and a romantic poet, and accounted for it by a difference of circumstances. Warton's even then extensive knowledge of the neglected periods of earlier English literature gave him a power that most of his contemporaries lacked, and enabled him to see that Spenser's peculiarities were those of his age, that the 'knights and damsels, the tournaments and enchantments of Spenser' were not oddities but the familiar and admired features of romance, a prevailing literary form of the age, and that 'the fashions of the time' determined Spenser's purpose of becoming a '*romantic* poet.' [27]

Warton determined, therefore, not only to judge but to praise Spenser as a romantic [28] poet. He found that as the characteristic appeal of pseudo-classical poetry was to the intellect, to the reason, romantic poetry addressed

[25] I, p. 18. [26] I, p. 21. [27] II, p. 72.

[28] Warton used the word *romantic* as a derivative of 'romance,' implying the characteristics of the mediæval romances, and I have used the word frequently in this paper with that meaning.

itself to the feelings, to the imagination. Its excellence, therefore, consisted not in design and proportion, but in interest and variety of detail. The poet's business was 'to engage the fancy, and to interest the attention by bold and striking images, in the formation, and disposition of which, little labour or art was applied. The various and the marvellous were the chief sources of delight.' [29] Hence Spenser had ransacked 'reality and romance,' 'truth and fiction' to adorn his 'fairy structure,' and Warton revelled in the result, in its very formlessness and richness, which he thought preferable, in a romantic poem, to exactness. 'Exactness in his poem,' he said, 'would have been like the cornice which a painter introduced in the grotto of Calypso. Spenser's beauties are like the flowers of Paradise.' [30]

When beauties thus transcend nature, delight goes beyond reason. Warton did not shrink from the logical result of giving rein to imagination; he was willing to recognize the romantic quest for beauties beyond the reach of art, to sacrifice reason and 'nature methodiz'd' in an exaltation of a higher quality which rewarded the reader with a higher kind of enjoyment. 'If the *Fairy Queen,*' he said, 'be destitute of that arrangement and œconomy which epic severity requires, yet we scarcely regret the loss of these, while their place is so amply supplied by something which more powerfully attracts us: something which engages the affections, the feelings of the heart, rather than the cold approbation of the head. If there be any poem whose graces please, because they are situated beyond the reach of art, and where the force and faculties of creative imagination [31] delight, because they are unas-

[29] I, p. 22. [30] I, p. 23.

[31] Without the same precision in nomenclature but with equal clearness of idea Warton distinguished between creative and imita-

sisted and unrestrained by those of deliberate judgment, it is this. In reading Spenser, if the critic is not satisfied, yet the reader is transported.' [32]

When Warton thus made a place for transport in a critical discourse, he had parted company with his contemporaries and opened the way for the whole romantic exaltation of feeling. He had turned from Dr. Johnson, who condemned 'all power of fancy over reason' as a 'degree of insanity,' [33] and faced toward Blake, who exalted the imagination and called 'reason . . . the only evil.' [34] Every propriety of Queen Anne criticism had now been violated. Not satisfied with condemning all previous Spenserian criticism as all but nonsense, Warton dared to place the uncritical reader's delight above the critic's deliberate disapproval, and then to commend that enthusiasm and the beauties that aroused it. In repudiating the pseudo-classical rules, Warton enunciated two revolutionary dicta: there are other critical standards than those of Boileau and the ancients (save the mark!); there

tive power in exactly the same way that Coleridge differentiated imagination and fancy. He did not compose exact philosophical definitions of the two qualities, but in a careful contrast between the poetic faculties of Spenser and Ariosto, he made the same distinction. Spenser's power, imagination, he described as creative, vital; it endeavours to body forth the unsubstantial, to represent by visible and external symbols the ideal and abstracted (II, p. 77). Ariosto's faculty, fancy, he called imitative, lacking in inventive power (I, p. 308; II, p. 78). Although Warton at times applied the term imagination loosely to both, there was no confusion of ideas; when he used both terms it was with the difference in meaning just described. In speaking of the effect of the marvels of romance upon the poetic faculty he said they 'rouse and invigorate all the powers of imagination' and 'store the fancy with . . . images' (II, p. 323).

[32] I, p. 24.

[33] *Rasselas*, Ch. XLIV.

[34] Crabbe Robinson's *Diary*. Ed. Sadler, Boston, 1870, II, p. 43.

are other poetical beauties than those of Pope and 'nature methodiz'd.'

Revolutionary as he was in his enjoyment of Spenser's fable, Warton had not at the time he wrote the Observations freed himself from the pseudo-classical theories of versification [35] and he agreed with his predecessors in his discussion of this subject. Although he did not feel the romanticist's enthusiasm for Spenser's versification, he was nevertheless sufficiently the poet to appreciate and to enjoy his success with it. 'It is indeed surprising,' he said, 'that Spenser should execute a poem of uncommon length, with so much spirit and ease, laden as he was with so many shackles, and embarrassed with so complicated a *bondage* of *riming*. . . . His sense and sound are equally flowing and uninterrupted.' [36] Similarly, with respect to language, we neither expect nor find enthusiasm. Warton thought Jonson 'perhaps unreasonable,' [37] and found the origin of his language in the language of his age, as he found the origin of his design in its romances. Long acquaintance enabled him to read the *Fairy Queen* with ease; he denied that Spenser's language was either so affected or so obsolete as it was generally supposed, and asserted that 'For many stanzas together we may frequently read him with as much facility as we can the same number of lines in Shakespeare.' [38] In his approval and

[35] Somewhat later he took a not insignificant part in the romantic movement in poetry.

[36] I, pp. 168-170.

[37] In his opinion that 'Spenser, in affecting the ancients, writ no language' (I, p. 184).

[38] I, p. 185. This parallel does not greatly help the case in an age when Atterbury could write to Pope that he found 'the hardest part of Chaucer . . . more intelligible' than some parts of Shakespeare and that 'not merely through the faults of the edition, but the obscurity of the writer' (Pope's *Works*, Elwin-Courthope ed., IX, p. 26).

appreciation of Spenser's moral purpose Warton was, of course, nearer to his pseudo-classical predecessors than to his romantic followers; however, without relinquishing that prime virtue of the old school, the solidity that comes from well-established principles, he attained to new virtues, greater catholicity of taste and flexibility of judgment.

In seeking in the literature of and before the sixteenth century and in the manners and customs of the 'spacious times of Great Elizabeth' for the explanation of Spenser's poem—so far as explanation of genius is possible—Warton was, as has been said, laying the foundations of modern historical criticism. Some slight progress had been made in this direction before, but without important results. Warton was by no means original in recognizing Spenser's debt to the Italian romances which were so popular in his day, and to Ariosto in particular. And many critics agreed that he was 'led by the prevailing notions of his age to write an irregular and romantic poem.' They, however, regarded his age as one of barbarity and ignorance of the rules, and its literature as unworthy of study and destitute of intrinsic value. No critic before Warton had realized the importance of supplementing an absolute with an historical criticism, of reconstructing, so far as possible, a poet's environment and the conditions under which he worked, in order to judge his poetry. 'In reading the works of a poet who lived in a remote age,' he said, 'it is necessary that we should look back upon the customs and manners which prevailed in that age. We should endeavour to place ourselves in the writer's situation and circumstances. Hence we shall become better enabled to discover how his turn of thinking, and manner of composing, were influenced by familiar appearances and established objects, which are utterly different from those

with which we are at present surrounded.' [39] And, realizing that the neglect of these details was fatal to good criticism, that the 'commentator,[40] whose critical enquiries are employed on Spenser, Jonson, and the rest of our elder poets, will in vain give specimens of his classical erudition, unless, at the same time, he brings to his work a mind intimately acquainted with those books, which though now forgotten, were yet in common use and high repute about the time in which his authors respectively wrote, and which they consequently must have read,' [41] he resolutely reformed his own practice.

Warton not only perceived the necessity of the historical method of studying the older poets, but he had acquired what very few of his contemporaries had attained, sufficient knowledge of the earlier English literature to undertake such a study of Spenser. He embarked upon the study of the *Fairy Queen,* its sources and literary background, with a fund of knowledge which, however much later scholars, who have taken up large holdings in the territory charted by that pioneer, may unjustly scorn its superficiality or inexactness, was for that time quite exceptional, and which could not fail to illuminate the poem to the point of transfiguration. Every reader of Spenser had accepted his statement that he took Ariosto as his model,

[39] II, p. 71.

[40] Warton ably and sharply met Pope's attack on Theobald for including in his edition of Shakespeare a sample of his sources, of "'——All such reading as never was read,'" and concluded 'If Shakespeare is worth reading, he is worth explaining, and the researches used for so valuable and elegant a purpose, merit the thanks of genius and candour, not the satire of prejudice and ignorance' (II, p. 319). In similar vein he rebuked such of his own critics as found his quotations from the romances 'trifling and uninteresting': 'such readers can have no taste for Spenser' (I, p. 91).

[41] II, pp. 317-18.

but no one before Warton had remarked another model, one closer in respect of matter, which the poet no doubt thought too obvious to mention, the old romances of chivalry. Warton observed that where Spenser's plan is least like Ariosto's, it most resembles the romances; that, although he 'formed his Faerie Queene upon the fanciful plan of Ariosto,' he formed the particular adventures of his knight upon the romances. 'Spenser's first book is,' he said, 'a regular and precise imitation of such a series of action as we frequently find in books of chivalry.' [42]

In proof of Spenser's indebtedness to the romances Warton cited the prevalence of romances of chivalry in his day, and pointed out particular borrowings from this popular poetry. In the first place he insisted again and again not only that the 'encounters of chivalry' which appeared so extraordinary to modern eyes were familiar to readers in Spenser's day,[43] but that the practices of chivalry were even continued to some extent.[44] Warton's close acquaintance with the literature of the sixteenth century and before showed him that the matter of the romances was common property and had permeated other works than those of mediæval poets. He discovered that the story of Arthur, from which Spenser borrowed most,

[42] I, p. 26.

[43] And even later to the time of Milton. Warton found Milton's mind deeply tinctured with romance reading and his imagination and poetry affected thereby (I, pp. 257 and 350). Even Dryden wanted to write an epic about Arthur or the Black Prince but on the model of Virgil and Spenser, not Spenser and the romances (*Essay on Satire*).

[44] I, p. 27 and II, pp. 71-72. Warton cited Holinshed's Chronicles (Stowe's contin.) where is an account of a tourney for the entertainment of Queen Elizabeth, in which Fulk Grevill and Sir Philip Sidney, among others, entered the lists (Holin., *Chron.*, ed. 1808, IV, pp. 435 ff.).

was so generally known and so great a favourite that incidents from it were made the basis for entertainment of Elizabeth at Kenilworth,[45] and that Arthur and his knights were alluded to by writers so various as Caxton, Ascham, Sidney, Puttenham, Bacon, and Jonson;[46] that even Ariosto[47] himself borrowed from the story of Arthur. At the same time his first-hand knowledge of the romances enabled him to point out among those which most directly influenced the *Fairy Queen,* Malory's *Morte Arthur,* the largest contributor, of course, from which such details as the story of Sir Tristram, King Ryence and the mantle of beards, the holy Grail, and the Blatant Beast were drawn;[48] *Bevis of Southampton,* which furnished the incident of the well of marvellous healing power;[49] the ballad of the Boy and the Mantle, from the French romance, *Le Court Mantel,* which suggested Spenser's conceit of Florimel's girdle.[50] Warton also carefully discussed Spenser's fairy mythology, which supplanted the classical mythology as his romantic adventures replaced those of anti-

[45] Warton quotes Laneham's 'Letter wherein part of the Entertainment untoo the Queen's Majesty at Killinworth Castl in Warwicksheer in this Soomer's progress, 1575, is signified,' and Gascoigne's 'Pleasures of Kenilworth Castle,' *Works,* 1576.

[46] I, pp. 50-74.

[47] I, pp. 53-57.

[48] I, pp. 27-57.

[49] I, pp. 69-71.

[50] I, p. 76. Warton says an 'ingenious correspondent communicated' to him this 'old ballad or metrical romance.' Part of *Le Court Mantel* he found in Sainte Pelaye's *Mémoires sur l'ancienne Chevalerie,* 1760. Other details, which could not be traced to particular romances, Warton attributed to 'a mind strongly tinctured with romantic ideas.' One of these, the custom of knights swearing on their swords, Upton had explained as derived from the custom of the Huns and Goths, related by Jornandes and Ammianus Marcellinus, but Warton pointed out that it was much more probably derived from the more familiar romances (II, p. 65). A Bodleian MS. containing Sir Degore and other romances is quoted from and described (II, pp. 5-9).

quity, ascribing its origin to romance and folk-lore of Celtic and ultimately Oriental origin.[51]

As in the case of mediæval romance, Warton was the first critic to consider in any detail Spenser's indebtedness to Chaucer. Antiquarians and a few poets had been mildly interested in Chaucer, but his importance for the study of the origins of English poetry had been ignored in the prevalent delusion that the classics were the ultimate sources of poetry. Dryden, to be sure, had remarked that Spenser imitated Chaucer's language,[52] and subsequent readers, including Warton, concurred. But it still remained for Warton to point out that Spenser was also indebted to Chaucer for ideas, and to show the extent and nature of his debt by collecting 'specimens of Spenser's imitations from Chaucer, both of language and sentiment.' [53] Without, of course, attempting to exhaust the subject, Warton collected enough parallel passages to prove that Spenser was not only an 'attentive reader and professed admirer,' but also an imitator of Chaucer. For example, he pointed out that the list of trees in the wood of error was more like Chaucer's in the *Assembly of Fowls* than similar passages in classical poets mentioned by Jortin; [54] that he had borrowed the magic mirror which Mer-

[51] I, pp. 77-89. Warton often used the terms Celtic and Norse very loosely without recognizing the difference. Like Huet and Mallet and other students of romance he was misled by the absurd and fanciful ethnologies in vogue in the 17th and 18th centuries. For his theory of romance see his dissertation *On the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe* prefixed to the first volume of his *History of English Poetry*, 1774. In spite of the absurdity of his theory as a whole, many details are surprisingly correct and illuminating.

[52] *Essay on Satire.* Dryden frequently referred to Chaucer as Spenser's master, meaning in the matter of language. See also *Dedication of the Pastorals* and *Preface to the Fables.*

[53] Section V, *Of Spenser's Imitations from Chaucer.*

[54] In his *Remarks on Spenser's Poems.* See *Observations* I, p. 190.

lin gave Ryence from the *Squire's Tale,*[55] and from the *Romance of the Rose,* the conceit of Cupid dressed in flowers.[56] By a careful comparison with Chaucer's language, Warton was able to explain some doubtful passages as well as to show Spenser's draughts from 'the well of English undefiled.'

One can scarcely overestimate the importance of Warton's evident first-hand knowledge of Chaucer in an age when he was principally known only through Dryden's and Pope's garbled modernizations, or Milton's reference to him who

> . . . . . left half-told
> The story of Cambuscan bold.

Warton was not satisfied that Chaucer should be studied merely to illustrate Spenser; he recognized his intrinsic value as well, and suffered his enthusiasm for Chaucer to interrupt the thread of his criticism of Spenser, while he lauded and recommended to his neglectful age the charms of the older poet.[57] To be sure Warton's reasons for admiring Chaucer were somewhat too romantic to convince an age that preferred regular beauties; his 'romantic arguments', 'wildness of painting', 'simplicity and antiquity of expression', though 'pleasing to the imagination' and calculated to 'transport us into some fairy region' were certainly not the qualities to attract Upton

[55] I, p. 205. Warton showed many instances of Spenser's interest in Cambuscan, including his continuation of part of the story. See also pp. 210 ff.

[56] I, p. 221.

[57] Warton found opportunity to express more fully his enthusiasm for Chaucer in a detailed study comparable to this of Spenser, in his *History of English Poetry* twenty years later. This contributed quite as much to the restoration of Chaucer as did Tyrwhitt's accurate elucidation of textual difficulties.

or Hughes or Dr. Johnson. Unlike the pseudo-classical admirers of Chaucer, Warton held that to read modern imitations was not to know Chaucer; that to provide such substitutes was to contribute rather to the neglect than to the popularity of the original. With characteristic soundness of scholarship Warton condemned the prevalence of translations because they encouraged 'indolence and illiteracy', displaced the originals and thus gradually vitiated public taste.[58]

The study of Spenser's age yielded the third element which Warton introduced into Spenserian criticism—the influence of the mediæval moralities and allegorical masques. Warton's study of Spenser's allegory is of quite another sort than Hughes's essay. Instead of trying to concoct a set of *a priori* rules for a kind of epic which should find its justification in its moral, Warton, as usual, was concerned with forms of allegory as they actually existed and were familiar to his poet, and with the history of allegorical poetry in England. Without denying the important influence of Ariosto, he pointed out that his predecessors had erred in thinking the *Orlando Furioso* a sufficient model; he saw that the characters of Spenser's allegory much more resembled the 'emblematical personages, visibly decorated with their proper attributes, and actually endued with speech, motion, and life' [59] with which Spenser was familiar upon the stage, than the less symbolical

[58] I, pp. 269-71. Warton extended this criticism to translations of classical authors as well. Of course the greatest of the classicists, Dryden and Johnson, realized the limitations of translation, that it was only a makeshift. See Preface to translation of Ovid's epistle, to *Sylvae* and to the *Fables*, and Boswell's *Johnson*, Hill Ed., III, p. 36. But the popularity of Dryden's translations, and the large number of translations and imitations that appeared during his and succeeding generations, justified Warton's criticism.

[59] II, p. 78.

characters of Ariosto. Warton could support his position by quoting references in the *Fairy Queen* to masques and dumb shows,[60] and by tracing somewhat the progress of allegory in English poetry before Spenser.[61] It is characteristic that he should not have been satisfied to observe that allegory was popular in Spenser's age, but that he should wish to explain it by a 'retrospect of English poetry from the age of Spenser.'[62] Superficial and hasty as this survey is, it must have confirmed Warton's opinion that a thorough exploration of early English poetry was needed, and so anticipated his *magnum opus*. And we can find little fault with its conclusions, even when he says that this poetry 'principally consisted in visions and allegories' when he could add as a matter of information, 'there are, indeed, the writings of some English poets now remaining, who wrote before Gower or Chaucer.'

In rejecting the conclusions of pseudo-classical criticism, in regarding Spenser as the heir of the middle ages, Warton did not by any means overlook the influence of the renaissance, of the classical revival, upon his poetry. His study of the classical sources from which Spenser embellished his plan[63] is as careful and as suggestive as his study of the mediæval sources; it is only not so strikingly new. His attack on Scaliger, who subordinated a comparative method to the demonstration of *a priori* conclusions, shows that he was a sounder classicist than that

[60] II, pp. 78-81. 'Spenser expressly denominates his most exquisite groupe of allegorical figures, the *Maske of Cupid*. Thus, without recurring to conjecture, his own words evidently demonstrate that he sometimes had representations of this sort in his eye.'

[61] II, pp. 93-103. Beginning with Adam Davy and the author of *Piers Plowman*. Like Spence, Warton recognized in Sackville's *Induction* the nearest approach to Spenser, and a probable source of influence upon him.

[62] II, p. 92.

[63] I, pp. 92-156.

pseudo-classical leader. Scaliger, he said, more than once 'betrayed his ignorance of the nature of ancient poetry'; [64] he 'had no notion of simple and genuine beauty; nor had ever considered the manners and customs which prevailed in early times.' [65] Warton was a true classicist in his admiration for Homer and Aristotle, and in his recognition of them as the 'genuine and uncorrupted sources of ancient poetry and ancient criticism'; [66] but, as has been said, he did not make the mistake of supposing them the sources of modern poetry and criticism as well.

Warton shows in this essay an extraordinarily clear recognition of the relation between classical, mediæval and modern literatures, and a corresponding adaptation of criticism to it. By a wide application of the historical method, he saw that English poetry was the joint product of two principal strains, the ancient or classical, and the mediæval or romantic; and that the poet or critic who neglected either disclaimed half his birthright. The poetry of Spenser's age, Warton perceived, drew from both sources. Although the study of the ancient models was renewed, the 'romantic manner of poetical composition introduced and established by the Provencial bards' was not superseded by a 'newer and more legitimate taste of writing.' [67] And Warton as a critic accepted—as Scaliger would not—the results of his historical study; he admired and desired the characteristic merits of classical poetry, 'justness of thought and design,' 'decorum,' 'uniformity,' [68] he 'so far conformed to the reigning maxims of modern criticism, as . . . to recommend classical propriety'; [69] but he wished them completed and adorned with the peculiar imaginative beauties of the 'dark ages,' those

[64] I, p. 147.
[65] I, p. 133.
[66] I, p. 1.
[67] I, p. 2.
[68] I, p. 2.
[69] II, pp. 324-5.

fictions which 'rouse and invigorate all the powers of imagination [and] store the fancy with those sublime and charming images, which true poetry best delights to display.' [70]

The inevitable result of recognizing the relation between the classical and romantic sources of literature was contempt for pseudo-classicism, for those poets and critics who rejected the beauties of romance for the less natural perfections approved by the classical and French theorists, who aped the ancients without knowing them and despised their own romantic ancestry. The greatest English poets, Warton perceived, were those who combined both elements in their poetry; those who rejected either fell short of the highest rank. And therefore he perceived the loss to English poetry when, after the decline of romance and allegory, 'a poetry succeeded, in which imagination gave way to correctness, sublimity of description to delicacy of sentiment, and majestic imagery to conceit and epigram.' Warton's brief summary of this poetry points out its weakness. 'Poets began now to be more attentive to words, than to things and objects. The nicer beauties of happy expression were preferred to the daring strokes of great conception. Satire, that bane of the sublime, was imported from France. The muses were debauched at court; and polite life, and familiar manners, became their only themes. The simple dignity of Milton [71] was either entirely neglected, or mistaken for bombast and insipidity, by the refined readers of a dissolute age, whose taste and morals were equally vitiated.' [72]

The culminating—perhaps the crowning—glory of War-

[70] II, pp. 322-3.

[71] There is a digression on Milton in the *Observations* (I, pp. 335-353) the prelude to his edition of Milton, 1785 and 1791.

[72] II, pp. 106-8.

ton's first piece of critical writing is his keen delight in the task. Addison had praised and popularized criticism,[73] but with reservations; and most people—even until recent times (if indeed the idea has now wholly disappeared from the earth)—would agree with Warton that the 'business of criticism is commonly laborious and dry.' Yet he affirms that his work 'has proved a most agreeable task'; that it has 'more frequently amused than fatigued [his] attention,' and that 'much of the pleasure that Spenser experienced in composing the Fairy Queen, must, in some measure, be shared by his commentator; and the critic, on this occasion, may speak in the words, and with the rapture, of the poet.'

> The wayes through which my weary steppes I guyde
> In this *delightfull land of faerie,*
> Are so exceeding spacious and wyde,
> And sprinkled with such sweet varietie
> Of all that pleasant is to ear or eye,
> That I nigh ravisht with rare thoughts delight,
> My *tedious travel* do forgett thereby:
> And when I gin to feele decay of might,
> It strength to me supplies, and cheares my dulled spright.

Warton's real classicism and his endeavours to carry his contemporaries with him by emphasizing wherever possible his accord with them, blinded them for a time to the strongly revolutionary import of the *Observations on the 'Fairy Queen,'* and the book was well received by pseudo-classical scholars. Its scholarly merits and the impulse it gave to the study of literature were generously praised by Dr. Johnson.[74] This is however scarcely a fair test;

[73] In his critical essays in the *Spectator.*

[74] July 16, 1754. 'I now pay you a very honest acknowledgement, for the advancement of the literature of our native country. You have shewn to all, who shall hereafter attempt the study of our ancient authours, the way to success; by directing them to the peru-

for the 'watch-dog of classicism,' although an indifferent scholar when compared with Warton, had an almost omnivorous thirst for knowledge, and although he despised research for its own sake, his nearest sympathy with the romantic movement was when its researches tended to increase the sum of human knowledge. Warburton was delighted with the *Observations,* and told Warton so.[75] Walpole complimented the author upon it, though he had no fondness for Spenser.[76] The reviewer for the *Monthly Review* [77] showed little critical perception. Although he discussed the book section by section, he discovered nothing extraordinary in it, nothing but the usual influence of Ariosto, defects of the language, parallel passage and learned citation; and he reached the height of inadequacy when he thus commended Warton's learning: 'Upon the whole, Mr. *Warton* seems to have studied this author with much attention, and has obliged us with no bad prelude for the edition, of which he advises us.[78] His acquaint-

sal of the books which those authours had read. Of this method, Hughes and men much greater than Hughes, seem never to have thought. The reason why the authours, which are yet read, of the sixteenth century, are so little understood, is, that they are read alone; and no help is borrowed from those who lived with them, or before them' (Boswell's *Johnson,* Hill Ed., I, p. 270).

[75] Warburton's *Letters,* No. CLVII, Nov. 30, 1762. *Works,* XIII, p. 338.

[76] Walpole to Warton, October 30, 1767. Walpole's *Letters,* Toynbee Ed., VII, p. 144.

[77] August, 1754, XI, pp. 112-124.

[78] Probably Upton's Edition of the *Fairy Queen,* which is frequently referred to in the second edition of the *Observations.* There is ample evidence in Johnson's letters and Warton's comments upon them, as well as his own manuscript notes in his copy of Spenser's Works that he intended a companion work of remarks on the best of Spenser's works, but this made so little progress that it cannot have been generally known. See Boswell's *Johnson,* I, p. 276, and Warton's copy of Spenser's works, ed. 1617. This quarto volume, which I have examined in the British Museum, contains copious notes which sub-

ance with our earliest writers must have qualified him with such a relish of the *Anglo-Saxon* dialect, as few poets, since *Prior,* seem to have imbibed.' A scurrilous anonymous pamphlet, *The Observer Observ'd, or Remarks on a certain curious Tract, intitl'd, 'Observations of the Faiere Queen of Spencer,' by Thomas Warton, A. M.,* etc., which appeared two years after the *Observations,* deserved the harsh treatment it received at the hands of the reviewers.[79] The immediate results on the side of Spenserian criticism were not striking. Two editions of the *Fairy Queen,* by John Upton and Ralph Church, appeared in 1758. Of these, the first was accused at once of borrowing without acknowledgment from Warton's *Observations;* [80] the second is described as having notes little enlightening; [81] both editors were still measuring Spenser by the ancients.[82]

From this time the Spenserian movement was wholly poetical. Warton's essay put a new seal of critical approval upon the *Fairy Queen* and Spenser's position as the poet's poet was established with the new school. He was no longer regarded judicially as an admirable poet who unfortunately chose inferior models for verse and fable with which to present his moral; he was enthusiastically adopted as an inexhaustible source of poetic inspiration, of imagination, of charming imagery, of rich colour, of elusive mystery, of melodious verse.

sequently formed the basis for the *Observations.* The notes continue partly through the shorter poems as well as the *Fairy Queen.* Some of them were evidently made for the second edition, for they contain references to Upton's edition.

[79] *Mon. Rev.,* July, 1756, xv, p. 90. *Crit. Rev.,* May, 1756, i, p. 374.

[80] *An impartial Estimate of the Rev. Mr. Upton's notes on the 'Fairy Queen,'* reviewed in *Crit. Rev.,* viii, pp. 82 ff.

[81] *Crit. Rev.,* vii, p. 106.

[82] H. E. Cory: *The Critics of Edmund Spenser,* Univ. of California *Pub. in Mod. Phil.* ii, 2, pp. 81-182, pp. 149-50.

Although Warton's pseudo-classical contemporaries did not perceive the full significance of his study of Spenser, his general program began to be accepted and followed; and his encouragement of the study of mediæval institutions and literature gave a great impetus to the new romantic movement. His followers were, however, often credited with the originality of their master, and their work was apt to arouse stronger protest from the pseudo-classicists.[83] When Hurd's very romantic *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* appeared, they were credited with having influenced Warton to greater tolerance of romance and chivalry.[84] This unjust conclusion was de-

[83] While even Dr. Johnson had only praise for the *Observations*, Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope*, on the whole a less revolutionary piece of criticism, touched a more sensitive point. He found the essay instructive, and recommended it as a 'just specimen of literary moderation' (Johnson's *Works*, Ed. 1825, v, p. 670). But as an attack on the reputation of the favourite Augustan poet, its drift was evident, and pernicious. This heresy was for him an explanation of Warton's delay in continuing it. 'I suppose he finds himself a little disappointed in not having been able to persuade the world to be of his opinion as to Pope' (Boswell's *Life*, Hill Ed., I, p. 448).

[84] *Crit. Rev.*, XVI, p. 220. It is perfectly evident, however, that the debt does not lie on that side. Hurd's *Letters* and the second edition of the *Observations* appeared in the same year, which would almost conclusively preclude any borrowings from the first for the second. But Warton's first edition, eight years before, had enough of chivalry and romance to kindle a mind in sympathy. Hurd was a less thorough student of the old romances themselves than Warton was. He seems to have known them through Sainte Palaye's *Mémoires sur l'Ancienne Chevalerie* (1750-81); for he said 'Not that I shall make a merit with you in having perused these barbarous volumes myself. . . . Thanks to the curiosity of certain painful collectors, this knowledge may be obtained at a cheaper rate. And I think it sufficient to refer you to a learned and very elaborate memoir of a *French* writer' (*Letters on Chivalry and Romance.* Letter IV, Hurd's *Works*, ed. 1811, IV, p. 260). Warton also new this French work (Ste. Pelaye's at least) and quoted from it, *Observations*, I, p. 76, and frequently in his *History of English Poetry.*

rived no doubt from the tone of greater confidence that Hurd was able to assume. Following both the Wartons, Hurd sharpened the distinction between the prevailing pseudo-classical school of poetry and what he called the Gothic; insisted upon the independence of its standards; and even maintained the superiority of its subjects.[85] In all this however he made no real departure from Warton, the difference being one of emphasis; Hurd gave an important impetus to the movement his master had begun. But with all his modernity, his admiration for the growing school of imaginative poets, he lacked Warton's faith in his school; he had no forward view, but looked back on the past with regret, and toward the future without hope.[86]

On the side of pure literary criticism Warton's first and most important follower was his elder brother, Joseph, whose *Essay on Pope* was a further application of his critical theories to the reigning favourite. This very remarkable book was the first extensive and serious attack upon Pope's supremacy as a poet, and it is credited with two very important contributions to the romantic movement: the overthrow of Pope and his school; and the substitution of new models, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton,

[85] 'May there not be something in the *Gothic* Romances peculiarly suited to the views of a genius, and to the ends of poetry?' (Hurd, IV, p. 239). 'Under this idea than of a *Gothic*, not classical poem, the *Fairy Queen* is to be read and criticized' (IV, p. 292). 'So far as the heroic and *Gothic* manners are the same, the pictures of each . . . must be equally entertaining. But I go further, and maintain that the circumstances, in which they differ, are clearly to the advantage of the *Gothic* designers . . . could Homer have seen . . . the manners of the feudal ages, I make no doubt but he would certainly have preferred the latter,' because of '*the improved gallantry of the Gothic Knights* and the *superior solemnity of their superstitions*' (IV, p. 280).

[86] Hurd's *Letters*, IV, p. 350.

and the modern school;[87] it contained the first explicit statement of the new poetic theories.[88]

Warton's *Observations on the 'Fairy Queen'* thus wrought so great and so salutary a change in literary criticism that it is practically impossible to exaggerate its importance. Here first the historical method was appreciated and extensively employed. Here first the pseudo-classicism of the age of Pope was exposed. Here first is maintained a nice and difficult balance between classical and romantic criticism: without underestimating the influence of classical literature upon the development of English poetry, Warton first insisted that due attention be paid the

[87] Joseph Warton placed Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, 'our only three sublime and pathetic poets' in the first class, at the head of English poets. The object of the essay was to determine Pope's place in the list. 'I revere the memory of POPE,' he said, 'I respect and honour his abilities; but I do not think him at the head of his profession. In other words, in that species of poetry wherein POPE excelled, he is superior to all mankind: and I only say, that this species of poetry is not the most excellent one of the art' (*Dedication* i-ii). 'The sublime and pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poetry. What is there transcendently sublime or pathetic in POPE?' (*Ded.* vi). After a careful examination of all Pope's works Joseph Warton assigned him the highest place in the second class, below Milton and above Dryden. He was given a place above other modern English poets because of the 'excellencies of his works *in general*, and *taken all together;* for there are *parts* and *passages* in other modern authors, in *Young* and in *Thomson*, for instance, equal to any of POPE, and he has written nothing in a strain so truly sublime, as the *Bard* of *Gray*' (II, p. 405). References are to the fifth edition, 2 vols., 1806.

[88] The first volume of Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope* appeared in 1756, two years after the *Observations.* Though its iconoclasm was more apparent, the latter essay made little advance in the way of new theory upon the earlier one, and there is rather more of hedging in the discussion of Pope than in that of Spenser. The greater variety of revolutionary dicta enunciated by the younger brother, and his greater activity in promulgating them, lead us to regard him as the more original thinker of the two.

neglected literature of the Middle Ages, which with quite independent but equally legitimate traditions contributed richly not only to the poetry of Spenser but to all great poetry since. His strength lies in the solidity and the inclusiveness of his critical principles. Without being carried away by romantic enthusiasm to disregard the classics, he saw and accounted for a difference between modern and ancient poetry and adapted his criticism to poetry as he found it instead of trying to conform poetry to rules which were foreign to it. This new criticism exposed the fatal weakness in the prevailing pseudo-classical poetry and criticism; it showed the folly of judging either single poems or national literature as independent and detached, and the necessity of considering them in relation to the national life and literature to which they belong. Thus Warton's freedom from prejudice and preconceived standards, his interest in the human being who writes poetry, and the influences both social and literary which surround him, his—for that day—extraordinary knowledge of all those conditions, enabled him to become the founder of a new school of criticism.

CLARISSA RINAKER.

VITA

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